

Connections

Celebrating Programs Through Partnerships
Fall 2001



From the Superintendent

Levy success and budget cuts

Pro Parks Results

What does the Pro Parks Levy mean for the average citizen and her family who visits the local community center?

I'm happy to report that we've made good progress as we near the end of the first year of implementation. To list just a few highlights related to community centers:

- We're providing cleaner community centers, parks and park restrooms through the hiring of workers to enhance building and park maintenance.
- We hired 21 teen development leaders, enabling us to improve and expand teen programming at our community centers. (See article on back.)
- We are staffing a new environmental stewardship programming office that will enhance environmental programs at community centers and environmental education centers.
- We will hire two program specialists in January 2002 to expand the senior programs and activities that we already provide.



I'm gratified that we are converting the vision and ideas of citizens like you into real programs, projects and land acquisitions. For more information on the Pro Park Levy, please visit www.cityofseattle.net/parks and click on Pro Parks, or call (206) 684-8020.

Budget Cuts

Unfortunately, we are entering a time of budget cuts, especially in programs and services supported by the city's "General Fund." The General Fund pays for police, fire, library, health, parks and recreation and other services. Higher utility costs and a loss of tax revenue have combined to create a major budget problem for 2002 and possibly beyond.

In early November, I submitted \$1.4 million in budget cuts to the Mayor for his consideration. Although we were able to absorb \$1.3 million in utility costs earlier this year without significantly affecting services, the new \$1.4 million in cuts ultimately do have an impact. Reductions include \$510,000 in administrative/management costs and efficiencies; \$160,000 in Zoo expenses; \$258,000 in recreation expenses; \$255,000 in park and facility maintenance costs and \$317,000 in other areas.

The major reduction in community recreation is eliminating Sunday operations at all community centers except for six (plus selected others during basketball season), and scaling back Saturday operations during the summer months.

As we go through this budget reduction process, I will keep the ARC and our center staff advised of what actions we are taking.

— Ken Bounds, Superintendent

From the Prez

Keeping advisory councils vital

In late July I attended the Urban Parks Conference, a trip that seems particularly poignant now, because it was held in New York City.

The conference was hosted by the Urban Parks Institute, a program of the Project for Public Spaces, which is a nonprofit organization founded in 1975 to "develop and encourage well-used public spaces." One of the several goals of the Urban Parks Institute is to "involve communities in park planning and development," and it was in this capacity that I found myself representing the Associated Recreation Council at the conference.

The workshops I attended involved some aspect of nonprofit partnerships. One thing I learned is that throughout the country (and the world), important parks projects and partnerships are forged purely on the strength of personal and professional relationships. The vitality of our advisory councils depends on developing and nurturing relationships with other community groups and nonprofits, schools, neighborhood businesses and institutions, and local policy makers.

The other interesting result of the conference is that I heard many stories from throughout the country about citizen nonprofit groups who work in various capacities with their local or regional parks departments in some aspect of parks maintenance, management, or operations. I can tell you that Seattle is light years ahead of any other city in having the infrastructure in place for citizen involvement. There were times I could barely contain myself from jumping on the stage to publicize our advisory councils and our citizens' crucial participation in planning and providing programming in their local community centers. Whenever I did have an opportunity to describe our system, the reaction was always amazement, awe and curiosity.

On the plane home, I reflected on the uniqueness of our advisory council system. It is truly a national model, and it occurs to me that we have work to do to bring our system up to its potential. It takes constant vigilance to ensure that any group reflects the diversity and breadth of its community.

Coincidentally, I attended an exploratory meeting last week in the South Division to discuss how the Parks Department and ARC can provide support to advisory councils, particularly with recruiting new members. Within the next few months, South Division advisory councils can expect to be surveyed to assess need and solicit feedback. At ARC's next quarterly meeting on December 12 we'll be updated on this pilot project, and discuss our most recent endeavor, an employment handbook and policy guide.

Meanwhile, ARC's Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 2002. The annual meeting committee is chaired by Ballard's Kiki Hendren, who has extensive experience planning public events. Dinner is provided for one member from each advisory council, and additional dinners may be purchased for a nominal fee. You will receive meeting notices and invitations to both of these events as the time approaches, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

— Jackie Ramels, ARC Board President



Teen programs get Pro Parks boost

The Pro Parks Levy has provided a much-needed boost to teen programming at community centers with the hiring of 21 Teen Development Leaders in September 2001. This means that for the first time, Seattle Parks and Recreation has full-time teen program staff at all community centers, the Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center and the Garfield Teen Life Center.

The teen leaders will form "teen councils," which will act as liaison groups with the advisory councils to help develop meaningful programs and activities for young people that focus on citizenship and leadership, environmental stewardship, arts and culture, academic achievement, sports and fitness, life skills and personal development.

Rainier Beach Community Center is a case in point. Teen Development Leader Necka Kapesi keeps her teen-agers busy with activities that are fun, educational and challenging. More than a place to just hang out, "we're a second home to many teens," says Kapesi.



Teen program participants at Rainier Beach Complex

She ticks off a long list of activities from which her 35 teens, age 12-18, can choose. When they arrive at the center at around 3 p.m.

all of the teens receive mandatory academic tutoring to aid their studies at middle school or high school. The kids come from nearby Rainier Beach and South Lake high schools, Franklin High School, and Aki Kurose, McClure and Meany middle schools. She gets other referrals from school counselors or local juvenile facilities.

At 4:30, the young people break out into a number of programs:

- On Mondays and Wednesdays, teen-age girls can take **LIFE (Ladies in Full Effect)** courses that offer workshops and focus groups on important teen issues from teen pregnancy to acculturation. They can also join the LIFE girls dance group in conjunction with Rainier Beach Late Night Recreation Program on Friday and Saturday nights.
- On Tuesday through Thursday, others involve themselves in **"Images of Beaches," an on-going wetlands restoration project** at Pritchard Beach on Lake Washington. In partnership with the Friends of Pritchard Beach and the Starflower Foundation, and the Rainier Beach Advisory Council, the program involves kids in real life wetland/watershed ecology, biology experiments, and in volunteer "work parties" to remove non-native invasive plants and restore the natural wetlands. The teens took on a project of their own to design and build an information/interpretive kiosk that has been proposed to be installed in front of the Pritchard Beach Bathhouse.
- They can join the staff of **"Through Our Eyes," a newsletter written by and for teens** and work with advisors on writing, editing, layout and publishing.
- They also have the opportunity to brush up on their **computer skills in the "Teens 'N Technology"** session in the center's computer lab, or take an **art program**, where they might work on a project like "Comfort Stations" in collaboration Parks crew chief Peggy Pullen that will create an attractive mural on the outside of an outdoor restroom.

With full-time staff, it is easier to pull together available

resources for these kinds of programs, says Kapesi. The result is better programs and the ability to serve more kids.

For more information on any of the programs mentioned in this article, please call Necka Kapesi, Rainier Beach Complex, at (206) 386-1925.

Pro Parks Opportunity Fund

If you have ideas for a park acquisition or improvement project in your neighborhood, please consider the Pro Parks Opportunity Fund.

The Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee recently approved criteria for the first funding cycle of the Pro Parks Opportunity Fund. Application forms are now available for project nominations for \$2 million in park acquisition funding and \$1 million for park improvement funding. Applications are due December 17, 2001. To view the criteria for the Opportunity Fund and for more information, please visit our web site www.cityofseattle.net/parks. Look for "Pro Parks" then "Opportunity Fund." Or contact Catherine Anstett, Seattle Parks and Recreation, (206) 615-0386, catherine.anstett@ci.seattle.wa.us.

Skateboarders ride the Magnolia "half pipe"

One of the most persistent demands for recreation facilities in the city is for more places for kids to skateboard.

This spring, after an ambitious skateboarder took out a big chunk of a concrete planter outside Magnolia Community Center, center coordinator Pati Maxwell came up with idea whose time had arrived: a bonafide skateboard course right there at the center.

"Kids who don't participate in organized sports needed something to do," recalled Maxwell. She approached the Magnolia Community Center Advisory Council, who loved the idea, and agreed to spend \$6,000 on the one-month pilot project.

The project involved contracting with local skateboard park experts from Rain City Skateboard Park who oversaw the design and construction of a series of plywood ramps, pyramids, rails and "half pipes."

The pilot skateboard park was open for one month in August 2001 to rave reviews from young people and parents. More than 50 kids a day used the course during the week and up to 200 on the weekends.

Key to the success of the experiment were strict rules about wearing helmets, no rough play, and picking up trash, sometimes enforced by the kids themselves. Community center staff also had a good view of the park through the front entrance.

Magnolia plans to open up

the course next year. In the meantime, coordinator Maxwell is on the hunt for a permanent location.

For more information about the Magnolia skateboard park, please call Pati Maxwell, Magnolia Community Center, at (206) 386-4235.

Credits

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Skateboarders outside Magnolia Community Center